

Aruba had a grand National Hymn and Flag Day!



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Vance to serve as RNC's finance chair in sign of his growing influence

By JILL COLVIN
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Vice President JD Vance has been tapped to serve as a top fundraiser at the Republican National Committee in another sign that he is cementing his status as the torchbearer of President Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement. It is the first time in the RNC's history that a sitting vice president has held the position of finance chair, giving Vance a prominent, direct role in next year's midterm elections and helping him build ties with top Republican donors. Vance headlined numerous fundraisers during the 2024 campaign, making the job an extension of those efforts. In a statement, Vance said that, "to fully enact the MAGA mandate and President Trump's vision that voters demanded, we must keep and grow our Republican majorities in 2026." He will focus, he said, on building "the war chest we need to deliver those victories next



Vice President JD Vance, center, speaks at a rally about "America's industrial resurgence," Friday, March 14, 2025, at Vantage Plastics in Bay City, Mich.

Associated Press

November." The appointment is the latest demonstration of how Vance is being embraced by many in Trump's orbit as his heir apparent more than three years before the 2028 election. The U.S. Constitution bars Trump from running for a third term, though he has repeatedly teased the prospect of remaining in office nonetheless. An open GOP primary will likely draw a long list of ambitious contenders. But several

of the party's most prominent voices have been openly pushing Vance. "The only person in the entire Republican Party, from my position, who's capable of carrying on the Trump legacy and expanding it, making it what it should fully be, is JD Vance," conservative commentator and former Fox News host Tucker Carlson said in a podcast interview released this week. "There's no one else," he went on. "I don't see any other —

at this point, as of today — any other conceivable option. I think JD Vance will be the nominee."

During an appearance Monday night in Wisconsin, Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., who has his own loyal following, called Vance "the only impressive vice president of my lifetime." He talked up his decision to back Vance — a personal friend — first in the Ohio GOP Senate primary, and then convincing his father to choose Vance as his running mate.

"When I went in all for JD for VP, I was up against every billionaire Republican donor. I used up my political capital with my father 'til like 2079," he joked. "I will be dead and I will still have not caught back up. But it was the right call." Trump, however, has been noncommittal.

Asked by Bret Baier during his Super Bowl interview whether he views Vance as his successor, Trump responded: "No. But is he very capable. I mean, I don't think that, you know, I think you have a lot of

very capable people. So far, I think he is doing a fantastic job. It's too early. We are just starting."

Vance has taken on a prominent role in the early days of the new administration, most notably during an explosive Oval Office meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during which he accused the Ukrainian leader of being "disrespectful."

He also blasted Europe during a speech last month at the Munich Security Conference, saying he feared free speech was "in retreat" across the continent.

His domestic portfolio has included helping Trump's Cabinet picks win Senate confirmation and working to secure a deal for a new operator for TikTok in the U.S. "JD will do a fantastic job as RNC Finance Chair," Trump said in a statement.

"He knows how to fight and win tough races. I'm glad he'll be working with Michael Whatley to help us secure our elections, get out the vote, and win big next year!" □



The chair for Minnesota state Sen. Justin Eichorn, a Republican from Grand Rapids, sits empty in a Senate hearing room in the State Capitol complex in St. Paul on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, a day after his arrest in Bloomington for allegedly soliciting a minor for prostitution.

By STEVE KARNOWSKI
Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Fellow Republicans called Tuesday on a Minnesota state sena-

tor to resign after police in suburban Bloomington arrested him for allegedly soliciting a minor for prostitution.

Associated Press

Minnesota Senate Republicans call on GOP colleague to resign after prostitution arrest

GOP Sen. Justin Eichorn, 40, of Grand Rapids, was arrested Monday after detectives communicated with a man who was led to believe that he was talking to a 16-year-old girl, the department said in a news release. A detective arranged to meet with him, and he was arrested outside his vehicle without incident.

He remained jailed in Bloomington on Tuesday afternoon pending his transfer to the Hennepin County Jail in Minneapolis, Deputy Chief Kim Clauson said. She said

she did not know if he had a lawyer who could speak on his behalf or if he had spoken with an investigator. Jail staff would not take a message for him.

The department said a felony charge of soliciting a minor for prostitution was pending, but the Hennepin County Attorney's Office said it had not yet received the case. A message left at Eichorn's Senate office was not immediately returned. According to his Senate profile, he's married with four children. He lists his

profession as entrepreneur and was first elected in 2016. His chair on an environment committee sat empty during a Tuesday hearing.

Senate Republicans as a group called on Eichorn to step down, as did House Republicans.

"We are shocked by these reports, and this alleged conduct demands an immediate resignation," his Senate GOP colleagues said in a statement. "Justin has a difficult road ahead, and he needs to focus on his family." □

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Trump and Putin agree to an immediate ceasefire for energy infrastructure in Ukraine conflict

By AAMER MADHANI, VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV and ZEKE MILLER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed during a lengthy call Tuesday to an immediate pause in strikes against energy infrastructure in the Ukraine war, but the Russian leader stopped short of backing a broader 30-day pause in fighting that the U.S. administration is pressing for. The White House described it as the first step in a "movement to peace" that it hopes will include a maritime ceasefire in the Black Sea and eventually a full and lasting end to the fighting.

Putin during the call reiterated his demand for an end to foreign military and intelligence assistance to Ukraine, according to the Kremlin. And there was no indication that he has backed away from his conditions for a prospective peace deal, which are fiercely opposed by Kyiv. Russia wants Ukraine to pull back its troops from the four regions that Moscow has annexed but never fully captured, renounce any prospect of joining the NATO military alliance and sharply cut its army.

Shortly after the call ended, air raid alerts sounded in Kyiv, followed by explosions in the city. Local officials urged people to seek shelter.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told reporters that Ukraine is open to any proposals that lead to a sustainable and just peace, but stressed the need for full transparency in discussions. Zelenskyy said he was seeking more details on what Putin and Trump agreed on, but rejected Putin's demand for halting military aid and intelligence sharing to Ukraine,



President Donald Trump, right, shakes hands with Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, during a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in Osaka, Japan, June 28, 2019.

Associated Press

warning that such a move would weaken Ukraine.

"We need to understand what the conversation is about," Zelenskyy said. "What are the details? And hopefully, we will be fully informed, and our partners will discuss everything with us."

Ukrainian officials earlier this month proposed a ceasefire covering the Black Sea and long-range missile strikes and the release of prisoners.

Trump immediately cheered Tuesday's development as a major step toward his ultimate goal of ending the biggest land war in Europe since World War II.

"We agreed to an immediate Ceasefire on all Energy and Infrastructure, with an understanding that we will be working quickly to have a Complete Ceasefire and, ultimately, an END to this very horrible War between Russia and Ukraine," Trump said on social media.

Putin also told Trump that Russia and Ukraine are set to exchange 175 prisoners

of war each on Wednesday, and Russia will also hand over to Ukraine 23 badly wounded soldiers, the Kremlin said. The limited pause comes as Trump still hopes to get Russia to sign off on his 30-day ceasefire proposal aimed at ending the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Ukrainian officials last week agreed to the 30-day ceasefire proposal during talks in Saudi Arabia led by Secretary of State Marco Rubio. White House special envoy Steve Witkoff then met with Putin in Moscow to discuss the proposal.

Zelenskyy, however, remains skeptical that Putin is ready for peace as Russian forces continue to pound Ukraine. "This is not a game where only Putin dictates the rules," Zelenskyy said, making clear he remains doubtful that Putin was serious about wanting peace.

The Trump-Putin engagement is just the latest turn in dramatically shifting U.S.-Russia relations as Trump

made quickly ending the conflict a top priority — even at the expense of straining ties with longtime American allies who want Putin to pay a price for the invasion.

Trump has at moments boasted of his relationship with Putin and blamed Ukraine for Russia's unprovoked invasion, all while accusing Zelenskyy of unnecessarily prolonging the biggest land war in Europe since World War II. Trump has said Washington and Moscow have already begun discussing "dividing up certain assets" between Ukraine and Russia as part of a deal to end the conflict. He said before the call that control of land and power plants would be part of the conversation, which came on the anniversary of Russia annexing Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula 11 years ago. That bold land grab by Russia set the stage for Russia to invade its neighbor in 2022.

But neither the White House nor Kremlin made any mention of land or power plants

in their post-call statements. Witkoff on Sunday suggested that U.S. and Russian officials have discussed the fate of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant — Europe's largest — in southern Ukraine. Russian troops seized the plant early in the war and it has been caught in the crossfire, fueling fears of a potential nuclear catastrophe.

The plant is a significant asset, producing nearly a quarter of Ukraine's electricity in the year before the war.

After a disastrous Feb. 28 White House meeting with Zelenskyy, Trump temporarily cut off some military intelligence-sharing and aid to Ukraine. It was restored after the Ukrainians last week signed off on the Trump administration's 30-day ceasefire proposal.

In his dealings with Zelenskyy and Putin, Trump has frequently focused on who has the leverage. Putin has "the cards" and Zelenskyy does not, Trump has said repeatedly.

Trump, who has long shown admiration for Putin, has also made clear he'd like to see the U.S.-Russia relationship return to a more normal footing.

The president during his recent contentious meeting with Zelenskyy grumbled that "Putin went through a hell of a lot with me," a reference to the federal investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election in which he beat Democrat Hillary Clinton.

Trump on Tuesday again underscored his view that Ukraine is not in a strong negotiating position. He said Russian forces have surrounded Ukrainian troops in Russia's Kursk region — amplifying an assertion made by Russian officials that's been disputed by Zelenskyy. □

Social Security Administration to require in-person identity checks for new and existing recipients

By **FATIMA HUSSEIN**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In an effort to limit fraudulent claims, the Social Security Administration will impose tighter identity-proofing measures — which will require millions of recipients and applicants to visit agency field offices rather than interact with the agency over the phone.

Beginning March 31st, people will no longer be able to verify their identity to the SSA over the phone and those who cannot properly verify their identity over the agency's "my Social Security" online service, will be required to visit an agency field office in person to complete the verification process, agency leadership told reporters Tuesday. The change will apply to new and existing Social Security recipients. Retiree advocates warn that the change will negatively impact older Americans in rural areas, including those with disabilities, mobility limitations, those who live far from SSA offices and have limited internet access.

The plan also comes as the agency plans to shutter dozens of Social Security offices throughout the country and has already laid out plans to lay off thousands of workers. In addition to the identity verification change, the



Demonstrators gather outside of the Edward A. Garmatz United States District Courthouse in Baltimore, on Friday, March 14, 2025, before a hearing regarding the Department of Government Efficiency's access to Social Security data.

agency announced that it plans to expedite processing of recipients' direct deposit change requests — both in person and online — to one business day. Previously, online direct deposit changes were held for 30 days.

"The Social Security Administration is losing over \$100 million a year in direct deposit fraud," Leland Dudek, the agency's acting commissioner, said on a Tuesday evening call with reporters — his first call with the media. "Social Security can bet-

ter protect Americans while expediting service."

He said a problem with eliminating fraudulent claims is that "the information that we use through knowledge-based authentication is already in the public domain." "This is a common sense measure," Dudek added.

More than 72.5 million people, including retirees and children, receive retirement and disability benefits through the Social Security Administration. Connecticut Rep. John Larson, the

top Democrat on the House Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee, said in a statement that "by requiring seniors and disabled Americans to enroll online or in person at the same field offices they are trying to close, rather than over the phone, Trump and Musk are trying to create chaos and inefficiencies at SSA so they can privatize the system."

The DOGE website says that leases for 47 Social Security field offices across the country, including in Arkansas,

Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Kentucky and North Carolina, have been or will be ended. However, Dudek downplayed the impact of its offices shuttering, saying many were small remote hearing sites that served few members of the public.

Many Americans have been concerned that SSA office closures and massive layoffs of federal workers — part of an effort by President Donald Trump and Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency to shrink the size of the federal government — will make getting benefits even more difficult.

Musk has pushed debunked theories about Social Security and described the federal benefit programs as rife with fraud, and called it a "Ponzi scheme" suggesting the program will be a primary target in his crusade to reduce government spending.

Voters have flooded town halls across the country to question Republican lawmakers about the Trump administration's cuts, including its plans for the old-age benefits program.

In addition a group of labor unions last week sued and asked a federal court for an emergency order to stop DOGE from accessing the sensitive Social Security data of millions of Americans. □

Associated Press



Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton speaks at a news conference in Dallas, June 22, 2017.

Associated Press

By **NADIA LATHAN**

Associated Press/Report for America

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A second person has been arrested in connection to a Texas midwife who is accused of providing illegal

abortions at a network of clinics operated outside of the Houston area.

Jose Manuel Cendan Ley, a 29-year-old medical assistant, is accused of performing an illegal abortion and practicing without a

Texas medical assistant arrested in connection to clinics accused of providing illegal abortions

license at a clinic in connection to Maria Margarita Rojas whose arrest was announced Monday by Republican Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton.

Court records show Ley was arrested on March 6, released on bond a few days later, then arrested again Monday.

Rojas, 48, was also charged with providing an illegal abortion and practicing medicine without a license, which are second- and third-degree felonies. She is accused of operating three clinics northwest of

Houston that performed illegal abortion procedures. Her arrest signified the first time authorities have filed criminal charges under the state's near-total abortion ban.

The attorney general's office is alleging that Ley worked as a medical assistant at one of Rojas' three clinics and performed at least one abortion illegally. In an announcement on Tuesday, the office states that Ley is a Cuban national who entered the U.S. illegally in 2022 and was later placed on parole. Rubildo

Labanino Matos, 54, was also arrested in connection to the investigation for practicing medicine without a license, according to Paxton's office.

"Individuals killing unborn babies by performing illegal abortions in Texas will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law, and I will not rest until justice is served," Paxton said in a statement. "I will continue to fight to protect life and work to ensure that anyone guilty of violating our state's pro-life laws is held accountable." □

Trump's cuts to VOA may be welcomed by China's government

By **KEN MORITSUGU** and **HUI-ZHONG WU**

Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — The recent move by U.S. President Donald Trump to make cuts at Voice of America and other U.S. government-run media may be welcome news for China's ruling Communist Party.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson refrained from commenting on Trump's decision Tuesday but took the opportunity to criticize the

outlets.

"I do not comment on U.S. domestic policy changes," Mao Ning said when asked about it. "But as for the media you mentioned, their bad records in reporting on China are not a secret."

The Trump's administration put almost the entire staff of Voice of America on leave last weekend and ended grants to Radio Free Asia and other media with similar news programming.

Radio Free Asia has an ex-



Wang Hao, Zhejiang Province Communist Party Secretary, leads a deliberation on the government work report, on the sideline of the National People's Congress, in Beijing, Thursday, March 6, 2025.

Associated Press

tensive Chinese-language service and frequently reports on human rights issues, including the detention of activists and repression of ethnic groups in Xinjiang and Tibet. The government

refutes allegations of abuse. Voice of America, also known as VOA, has a Chinese-language website that often publishes stories not covered by Chinese media, which is state-controlled.

China ranks 172 out of 180 in the Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.

The Global Times, a state-owned tabloid, criticized Voice of America at length in an editorial this week.

"The so-called beacon of freedom, VOA, has now been discarded by its own government like a dirty rag," it said.

Beyond China, Cambodia's former Prime Minister Hun Sen, who ruled his country for near four decades as an autocrat, welcomed Trump's move.

"This is a major contribution to eliminating fake news, disinformation, lies, distortions, incitement, and chaos around the world coming from the propaganda machine that President Trump has stopped funding," he said Monday in a written statement. □

FBI applauds Mexico's arrest and handover of '10 Most Wanted' gang figure



FBI Director Kash Patel speaks during a ceremony to raise the Hostage and Wrongful Detainee flag at the State Department, Thursday, March 6, 2025, in Washington.

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — FBI Director Kash Patel applauded Mexican authorities Tuesday for the arrest and handover of one of the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted" suspects, an alleged gang leader from El Salvador. Francisco Javier Román Bardales is allegedly a senior leader of the Mara Salvatrucha or MS-13 gang. He was arrested Monday in the mountains of the Gulf coast state of Veracruz by soldiers and federal agents. "This is a major victory both for our law enforcement partners and for a safer America," Patel wrote. Mexico's security chief Omar García Harfuch applauded the arrest Monday, which his agency said was the result of international cooperation. The agency referred to his handover as a deportation to the United States. Román Bardales faces charges related to violent crime, drug distribution and extortion in the Eastern District of New York.

The Mara Salvatrucha was one of eight Latin American criminal organizations

declared foreign terrorist organizations by the U.S. government last month.

FBI Director Kash Patel said via X Tuesday that Roman Bardales was being transported within the U.S. He thanked Mexican authorities for their support.

The arrest and swift handover came just weeks after Mexico handed over 29 drug cartel figures, including drug lord Rafael Caro Quintero, who was behind the killing of a U.S. DEA agent in 1985. Mexico has also stepped up operations against the Sinaloa cartel, a main trafficker of fentanyl to the United States. President Claudia Sheinbaum has worked to show U.S. President Donald Trump that Mexico is a reliable partner on security and immigration. The results have so far kept most of Trump's tariffs at bay.

The Trump administration sent two other top members of MS-13 to El Salvador over the weekend, along with hundreds of Venezuelan immigrants. □



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Canada's new prime minister announces Australian radar purchase while visiting edge of Arctic Circle

By ROB GILLIES

Associated Press

IQALUIT, Nunavut (AP) —

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney on Tuesday announced a multibillion-dollar radar purchase from Australia and an expansion of military operations in the Arctic while visiting Canada's far north in an effort to assert sovereignty over the increasingly contested region. The prime minister's office said that the Canadian \$6 billion (\$4.2 billion) "Over-the-Horizon Radar" system will provide early warning radar coverage from the Canada-United States border into the Arctic.

Carney made the announcement at a military base in the capital of the Inuit-governed territory of Nunavut. It was his last stop after visiting Paris and London for meetings with leaders there.

"Arctic sovereignty is a strategic priority of our government," Carney said. "Canada is and forever will be an Arctic nation."

The Australian radar system will consist of a series of pillars almost a mile (1.6 kilometers) in length. Officials said that the system would have a smaller footprint than what the similar American system would take up. Senior Canadian government officials, who briefed reporters on Carney's plane before the announcement,



Canada Prime Minister Mark Carney, left to right, makes an announcement as Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Jennie Carignan, Defence Minister Bill Blair and Nunavut Premier P.J. Akeagok look on at a Canadian Armed Forces forward-operating location in Iqaluit, Nunavut, on Tuesday, March 18, 2025.

Associated Press

said that the purchase has been well received by top military officials in the North American Aerospace Defense Command, the joint U.S.-Canadian military command that overseas threats over the two countries.

But the officials said they couldn't say how the Australian purchase would be received politically by Washington. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly. Canada's top military com-

mander also planned to announce that the government will spend Canadian \$420 million (\$294 million) to expand Canada's Arctic operations and training exercises and deploy more personnel. Carney said Canada will have a "greater sustained year-round presence."

The prime minister is in Iqaluit, which is by far the largest municipality in Nunavut, a vast territory straddling the Arctic Circle. Nunavut is roughly the size of the U.S.

states of Alaska and California combined, with a mostly Inuit population of about 40,000.

The prime minister's flight path took him over Greenland. U.S. President Donald Trump's interest in Greenland, northeast of Nunavut, comes as part of an aggressively "America First" foreign policy platform that has included threats to take control of the Panama Canal and suggestions that Canada should become the 51st U.S. state.

"The United States priorities, once closely aligned with our own, are beginning to shift," Carney said.

Trump has threatened economic coercion to make Canada the 51st state. His constant talk of annexation has infuriated Canadians and turned around the political fortunes of the governing Liberal party, which was headed for a historic defeat but now has a chance of winning a fourth term. Carney is expected to call a general election by the end of the week.

Trump is threatening sweeping tariffs on all Canadian products and has already placed them on steel and aluminum.

The prime minister's office expects Carney to have a call with Trump in the coming days. Carney said at the "appropriate time" he will have a discussion with the U.S. president, as "two sovereign nations, that is comprehensive and not targeted at one issue."

For much of the year, the weather in Iqaluit can be severe. In February 2010, Iqaluit hosted a meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors from the Group of Seven nations. Several of the dignitaries, including Carney when he was head of Canada's central bank, went dogsledding in subfreezing temperatures. □



French Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau leaves the weekly cabinet meeting, Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2025 at the Elysee Palace in Paris.

Associated Press

ALGIERS, Algeria (AP) — A dispute over the fate of 60 Algerians that France hopes to deport has deep-

ened a rupture between the countries that has approached a historic low over the past year.

France and Algeria feud over expulsion policy as tensions flare between the two countries

Algeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday rejected a French list of Algerians "with a dangerous profile" set for deportation.

It said the list from France's Interior Ministry bypassed traditional diplomatic channels for such expulsions and not giving the Algerians their rightful trials. The ministry statement rejected "threats and intimidation attempts, as well as injunctions, ultimatums, and any coercive language."

France's right-wing Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau, who had previously threatened that France could terminate decades-old immigration and visa accords, on Tuesday pledged to retaliate in a post on X. The list in question is the first time that France has publicly discussed compiling and transmitting names of those slated for expulsion. The names are a fraction of the Algerians that French authorities have previously

said they've designated for deportation.

As conservative forces have risen in France in recent months, officials including Retailleau have pushed for stricter immigration controls, and the government has intensified its efforts to expel Algerians. Data submitted to France's parliament last year showed less than 10% of French expulsion orders lead to actual deportations. □



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Surf's Up: Favorite places to catch waves in Aruba



ORANJESTAD – Whether you are a salt-seasoned surfer looking for a thrill, or just looking to wet your toes in a little ocean adventure, Aruba has amazing places to learn and practice surfing! Although more known for the calmer waters of Palm Beach, Eagle Beach and Mangel Halto, Aruba also has some special places to thrill your senses.

Because of strong winds and breezes, Aruba is perfect for wind and kite surfing. You will surely notice kites in the air as you drive around the wilder, rougher areas on Aruba's east side.

There are plenty of surf shop rentals to help you with your gear, and there are also a lot of tutors if you're looking to try for the first time and need a little help. These can be found around the island, and will surely come in hand if you're wanting to try a new experience!

With that said, here are Aruba's favorite surf spots!

Andicuri

Andicuri is recognized as the best place for body boarding. Because of the rough waves, this beach is better suited for those with more experience in surfing. However, the beach with two bluffs – one on each side – is worth a visit, if only

to watch the exciting show presented by the surfers.

To go to Andicuri, you will need a 4x4 vehicle and drive from the ex-Natural Bridge Center. Alternatively, you can make it an adventure by going on a hike! The scenery is unique and beautiful on its own.

Reaching Andicuri Beach can be an adventure in itself, as it can be difficult to find and is only accessible by 4x4 vehicle or walking from the ex-Natural Bridge center, but the impressive scenery makes it all worthwhile!

Arashi

Arashi, a beach located close to the California Lighthouse, is a good spot for learning and having fun – if you're lucky! The waves at Arashi are usually calm, but with just the right weather, a swell forms attracting all the local surfers to the area.

Boca Grandi

Boca Grandi is at the most southern spot in Aruba, and is a popular spot with experienced surfers. Close to the famous Red Anchor and our beloved Sunrise City – San Nicolas, a trip to Boca Grandi can easily turn into an all-day trip to this area of the island. With a beautiful beach (although it is not

allowed to swim here, because of strong currents), you can enjoy a relaxing time combing the beach for driftwood, coral, and little crabs and snails.

Hadicurari

Known locally as Fisherman's Hut, here is where you will find most of the action for surfers in Aruba. With a variety of surf shops and schools in this area, you will find it easy to get

in on the action. Hadicurari is also the site of the Aruba Hi Winds World Challenge, which takes place usually in June/July, and it is the largest windsurfing competition in the Caribbean!

Malmok

If you're a beginner, this is your spot. There are also various shops to rent gear and receive lessons, facilitating learning and just trying out a new experi-



ence. The beach is also popular for paddleboarding and other watersport activities. □

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Aruba had a grand National Hymn and Flag Day!



Yesterday, Aruba celebrated its national day, March 18th—Hymn and Flag Day. As is tradition, the people of Aruba went out and enjoyed various activities across the island, where they could experience dance performances, eat local cuisine, and celebrate Aruba in general.

Since Sunday, March 17th, Aruba has been enjoying cultural celebrations. As customary, on Sunday night, the cultural manifestation took place at Plaza Betico Croes.

That night, Plaza Betico Croes came alive with a cultural atmosphere. There were different stands offering local food, sweets, arts, crafts, and much more. Of course, the people enjoyed an unforgettable musical and dance show.

The morning of March 18th began with the official cultural ceremony in front of Plaza Betico Croes, attended by the Governor of Aruba, Alfonso Boekhoudt, along with other island officials.

Various social, cultural, and sports groups, along with different organizations, participated in an official parade, presenting themselves before the Governor and other leaders.

To continue the celebrations, people could enjoy activities across the island, including events at Club Caiquetio, Aruba Aloe, Cas di Cultura, the National Library of Aruba, the Archaeological Museum, Centro Hubenil Washington, and many other locations. □

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Aruba to me

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said

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Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from Don and Mary Alhart from Pittsford, New York, USA

They wrote to us saying: "Aruba to me are the friendships we renew each March at the Marriott Surf Club. This year, we celebrated with a display of special hats. We also exchanged Christmas ornaments



to remember each other during the holiday season at home. Aruba has truly blessed us with "One Happy Family!"

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □

Papiamento words and phrases you may want to know!

(Oranjestad)—Aruba is a melting pot of different nationalities, cultures and languages. Primarily for this reason, the average Aruban can understand and speak Dutch, English and Spanish relatively well. However, as much as we pride ourselves in being able to communicate with almost everyone, we cherish our native tongue Papiamento above all else. Want to learn some common words in our language? Here are a few basic words and phrases that can get you a hat tip from an Aruban.

When you arrive at the airport in Aruba, one of the first words in Papiamento you may encounter is "Bon bini." Bon bini in Papiamento means welcome, and is probably the most famous Papiamento word for tourists.

Hi! Bye!

To be fair, there is no unique way to say "hello" in Papiamento. At least, not officially. We often just use the English "hello" or "hey", or Dutch "hallo" to greet someone. We do however, always follow it up



with "con bay?" or "con ta?" Con bay is a shortened version of "con ta bay?", which essentially means "how are you?"

The word "con" in Papiamento means "how?" and is pronounced with a rounder "o" sounds, like in the English word "cone". "Ta bay" refers to how you are doing.

When we say goodbye, we use the word "ayo" (not like the Ayo Rock Formation, but also...kinda?). We may also use "te oro", which means "see you later".

Greetings during the day

Most, if not all, languages have different ways to greet according to the time of day, and Papiamento is no different. Since Papiamento is heavily influences from Portuguese

and Spanish, some of these phrases may look very familiar.

1. Bon dia is used in the morning, up to about noon. Bon dia essentially means good morning. The word "bon" means "good", and while "dia" does not directly mean "morning" in English, it is used often to refer to the morning time.
2. Bon tardi. In the afternoon to early evening hours, we use "bon tardi" to greet people, which means "good afternoon". "Tardi" actually comes from the word "atardi", which directly translates to "afternoon". However, the shortened "tardi" is used to keep the rhythm on the phrase. And the same could be said for our last greeting of the day.
3. Bon nochi. You guessed it, "bon nochi" means "good night".

Just like "tardi", "nochi" is actually the shortened version of the word "anochi".

Yes...no...maybe?

The affirmative and negative expression is very simple in Papiamento. Just like Spanish, our yeses are "si" and our no's are "no". Pretty easy right? If you want to gain some extra points from younger locals, you can also say "se", which is a more casual affirmative used mostly by the younger generation. However, do note: some older generations may find this improper and not respectful, so keep that in mind.

Thanks man...

Lastly, a word that we can also say more often is "danki", which means literally "thank you". "Danki" is derived from the Dutch word "bedankt". Though we don't really have a translation for "I appreciate it" in English, we do use "masha danki" to convey the message. "Masha" means "a lot" or "very", so "masha danki" means "thank you very much". □



Article by Etnia Nativa

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The Wonders of Limestone Caves

Our weekly episodes, brought to you by Etnia Nativa, serve as a platform to recognize, appreciate, and promote Aruba's cultural heritage, emphasizing the importance of reconnecting with the island's unique roots and its ancestral spirit.

During this episode, we will share the rich archaeological evidence and the peculiarities of the limestone caves, while in previous episodes; we explained the limestone terraces of the island.

In prehistoric times, many limestone caves became important sites for different cultures, serving as shelters, ritual centers, and even as places where history was portrayed through rock art. Caves in Aruba, such as Canashito and Fontein, demonstrate how these locations also became canvases for early human expression. Limestone caves often have a long lifespan, remaining habitable for thousands of years, which encouraged prolonged use as shelters. The continuity of these sites allowed early humans to adapt and develop survival strategies.

The hard, durable nature of limestone provided strong and stable cave walls that protected inhabitants from the elements, such as harsh weather, rain, and wind. Caves could also shield people from predators and other dangers. They typically maintain a relatively stable temperature throughout the year. They act as natural coolers in the summer and warm shelters in the winter, offering a more comfortable environment compared to open-air living. Many of these caves are located in accessible areas like hillsides, cliffs, or river valleys, making them easy to find and reach. The entrances were often large enough to accommodate groups of people and their needs.

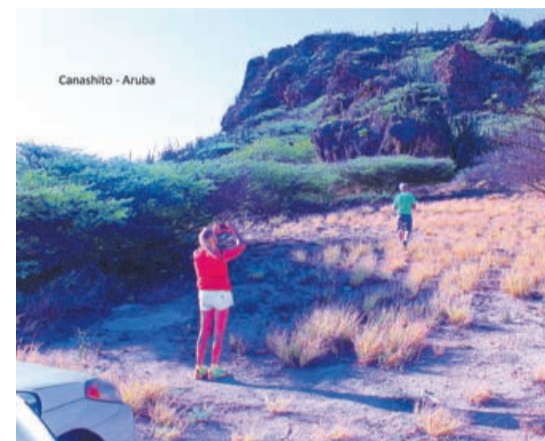
The entrance to these caves could be easily defended from intruders. This made caves a strategic choice for early human societies, as they provided a natural fortification. Also, they often have natural water sources, such as nearby streams or springs, which are essential for drinking and food preparation, while these caves might contain mineral deposits that could be useful for tool-making or other cultural survival needs.

In short, limestone caves provided practical, safe, and resource-rich environments for prehistoric people and our island has many caves that were used for shelter, rock art expression and a spiritual portal in to the underworld.

Structurally, these are unique geological formations that develop through chemical weathering, primarily due to the action of water on limestone rock. They are characterized by their impressive stalactites, stalagmites, and flowstones, formed by the deposition of minerals such as calcium carbonate over thousands or even millions of years.

The uniqueness of these remarkable areas lies in their formation and distinctive characteristics: water, often slightly acidic due to dissolved car-

Episode CCXCV - 295



bon dioxide, seeps into the limestone and gradually dissolves it. This process creates underground voids that can eventually become large caves. The mineral-rich water inside the cave forms unique formations known as stalactites (which hang from the ceiling) and stalagmites (which rise from the floor). These formations develop slowly, often requiring thousands of years to reach large sizes.

Limestone caves harbor unique ecosystems, with species of bats, insects, and microorganisms that have adapted to their dark and often quite humid environment. Within the caves, the size often varies, with small, narrow passages and even enormous chambers. The shape and structure are influenced by factors such as water flow and the nature of the limestone itself.

These caves are not only natural wonders but also important for scientific research on geology, ecology, and hydrology and have provided practical, safe, and resource-rich environments for the prehistoric inhabitants of our planet. □



If you really enjoyed reading our stories and are interested in interacting and learning more about our island's true identity, there is no better choice than Etnia Nativa—the only 'living museum of its kind in the Caribbean.' It's a fascinating opportunity, a trendsetter since 1994, and a co-founder of Islands National Park, the Archaeological Museum Aruba, and numerous Artisan Foundations, among others. Etnia Nativa shares valuable knowledge and connects you with the ancient spirit and soul of the island. We recommend booking a visit via WhatsApp +297 592 2702, as visits are private and by appointment only. You can also reach us at etnianativa03@gmail.com

Did you know about...

Basic driving rules on Aruba (part 2)

(Oranjestad)—In Yesterday's issue, we've provided some basic rules when driving on the four-lane highways and roundabouts on the island. Today, we want to offer you more tips and tricks when it comes to driving on the roads and highways of Aruba.

Speed limit in certain areas

As mentioned in yesterday's issue, the legal minimum and maximum speed limit on the island is 50 and 80 km/h respectively. However, there are some areas where it is mandated to drive up to a certain speed. This is always indicated by a circular traffic sign with red border and the number 50 on it. Signs like these are always paired

by a similar sign with the number crossed out further down the road. This means that the mandate for this speed is now over; you may increase your velocity. Red borders on traffic sign—whether it's a circle or triangle—usually signal a warning, prohibition or preference.

Besides the "50" sign, you may also

encounter a traffic sign that says "bebouwde kom". These can be found in San Nicolas and Oranjestad. Bebouwde kom signs are rectangular and blue, and essentially tell you that you are in a heavily inhabited area. The maximum speed limit in a bebouwde kom is 50 km/h. Just like the previous pair, bebouwde kom signs are also paired with a similar sign crossed out.

Priority signs

On the main roads of Aruba (not the highways), you may see a yellow, squared sign with a white border. This sign tells you that on this road, you have priority and all other traffic should yield to you. This sign can be seen in Savaneta for example. So, if you are driving on the main road in Savaneta going to San Nicolas, you are driving on a single long road, and other cars that want to get on this main road or cross it, either from an intersection or from a dirt road, must all wait until traffic on the main road is clear. In other words, you do not have to stop for them. This sign too has a counter part that indicates that your priority is over.

Another priority sign you may encounter is a triangle sign with a red border and something that looks like a cross. You'll see this sign in an intersection. The general rule of thumb for crossing an intersection that do not contain traffic lights, roundabouts, sign or arrows on the road, is to always yield for traffic on your right. However, if you encounter this sign on your side of the intersection, you have priority over the other cars, even the one on your right.

However, be careful not to confuse this sign with a similar up-side down triangle, also found on intersections. This sign is a prohibition sign, telling you that you have to stop and give other cars priority. Of course you also have a "stop" sign that mean the same thing. The stop sign is generally used for tricky intersections with minimal view of opposite incoming traffic.

These are some of the basic rules that you would have to know if you decide to drive on the island. These are of course other traffic signs, and we recommend you visit aruba-travelguide.com for an extensive overview of all traffic signs used on Aruba. □

Picture credits: aruba-travelguide.com



bebouwde kom



end bebouwde kom



end priority



end speed limit



intersection priority



priority



speed limit



stop sign



triangle stop sign

CROSSWORD

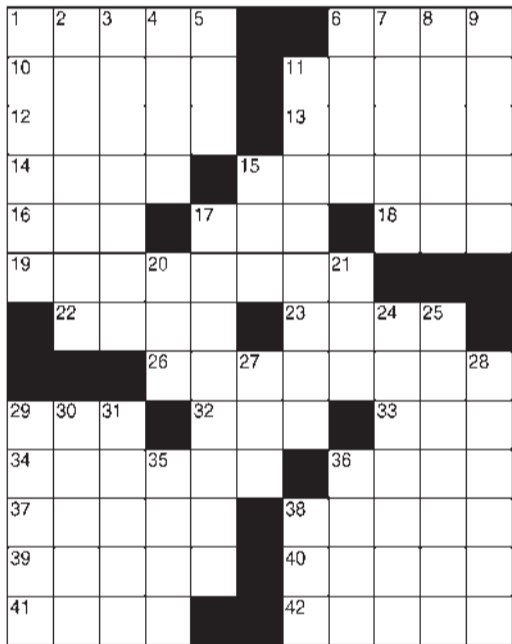
By **THOMAS JOSEPH**

ACROSS

- 1 Ease up
6 Sunset site
10 Jimmy Smits series
11 Grand, for one
12 Battery, e.g.
13 Rocker John
14 Fine study
15 Ripen
16 Poker prize
17 Melody
18 For each
19 Skunks
22 Turn to liquid
23 Outfits
26 Old World rodents
29 Brink
32 Phone bill addition
33 Ray-gun sound
34 Boxing combo
36 Soccer great
37 Opera's Callas
38 2008 Pixar movie
39 Rage
40 Gawked at
- 41 Call for
42 Like an untended garden

DOWN

- 1 Dogpatch creator
2 Watering hole
3 Some-what
4 Scots' caps
5 Ram's mate
6 Droop
7 "Dig in!"
8 Boring movie
9 Copier need
11 Partridge perch
15 Hamm of soccer
17 Aggres-sive move, perhaps
20 Avenue tree
21 Polite address
24 Graceful antelope
25 Seized up
27 Summer sign
28 Swift
29 Caesar, for one
30 Non-sensical
31 Come together
35 Even
36 Book unit
38 Impress greatly



3-20

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-20

CRYPTOQUOTE

DWV UXDU'T UXJ UXMWN
DSBQU OJBOGJ PXB FJDW
JYJZCUXMWN UXJC TDC. UXJC
UXMWL JYJZCBWJ JGTJ VBJT
UBB. — LXDGV XBTTJMW
Cryptoquote: SPRING IS NATURE'S
WAY OF SAYING, "LET'S PARTY!" — ROBIN
WILLIAMS

Cruise ship Schedule: March 15 - 21 2025

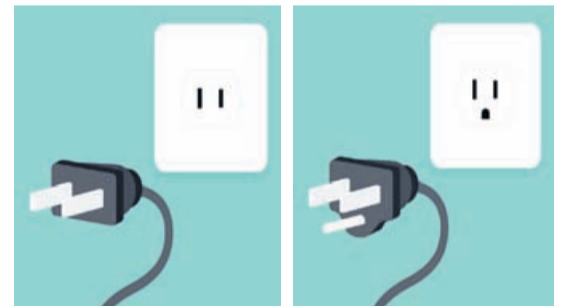
			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
SAT	15	EMERALD PRINCESS EXPLORER OF THE SEAS STAR PRIDE	09.00 16.30 06.00	22.00 **** 18.00	B C F	1 1 1
SUN	16	EXPLORER OF THE SEAS - Dept. SILVER MOON	**** 08.00	17.00 23.00	C B	- 1
MON	17	AIDAPERLA RESILIENT LADY NORWEGIAN GEM	08.00 09.00 07.00	18.00 23.59 17.00	B C I	1 1 1
TUE	18	MSC DIVINA CARNIVAL HORIZON NORWEGIAN VIVA	08.00 09.00 13.00	22.00 23.00 21.00	B C I	1 1 1
WED	19	CELEBRITY REFLECTION	10.30	23.00	C	1
THU	20	WIND STAR ROTTERDAM	10.00 08.00	23.00 17.00	G C	1 1
FRI	21	NORWEGIAN JEWEL	11.30	20.30	C	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.



Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.



Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.



Classifieds

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Eagle beach
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Phase 2
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commercial land at
Sabana Basora
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Building C Non mandatory main-
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1509
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Dutch Village

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HEALTH

DOCTOR ON DUTY

Oranjestad

Hospital 7:00 pm / 10:00pm
Tel. 527 4000

San Nicolas

Imsan 24 hours
Tel.524 8833

PHARMACY ON DUTY

Oranjestad:
del Pueblo: Tel.582 1253
San Nicolas:
Seroe Preto:Tel.584 4833

OTHER

Dental Clinic 587 9850
Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
Urgent Care 586 0448
Walk-In Doctor's Clinic
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EMERGENCY

Police	100
Oranjestad	527 3140
Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

TAXI SERVICES

Taxi Tas	587 5900
Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

TRAVEL INFO

Aruba Airport	524 2424
American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

AID FOUNDATIONS

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FAVI- Visually Impaired
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Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989
Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400
Centre for Diabetes
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Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433

Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

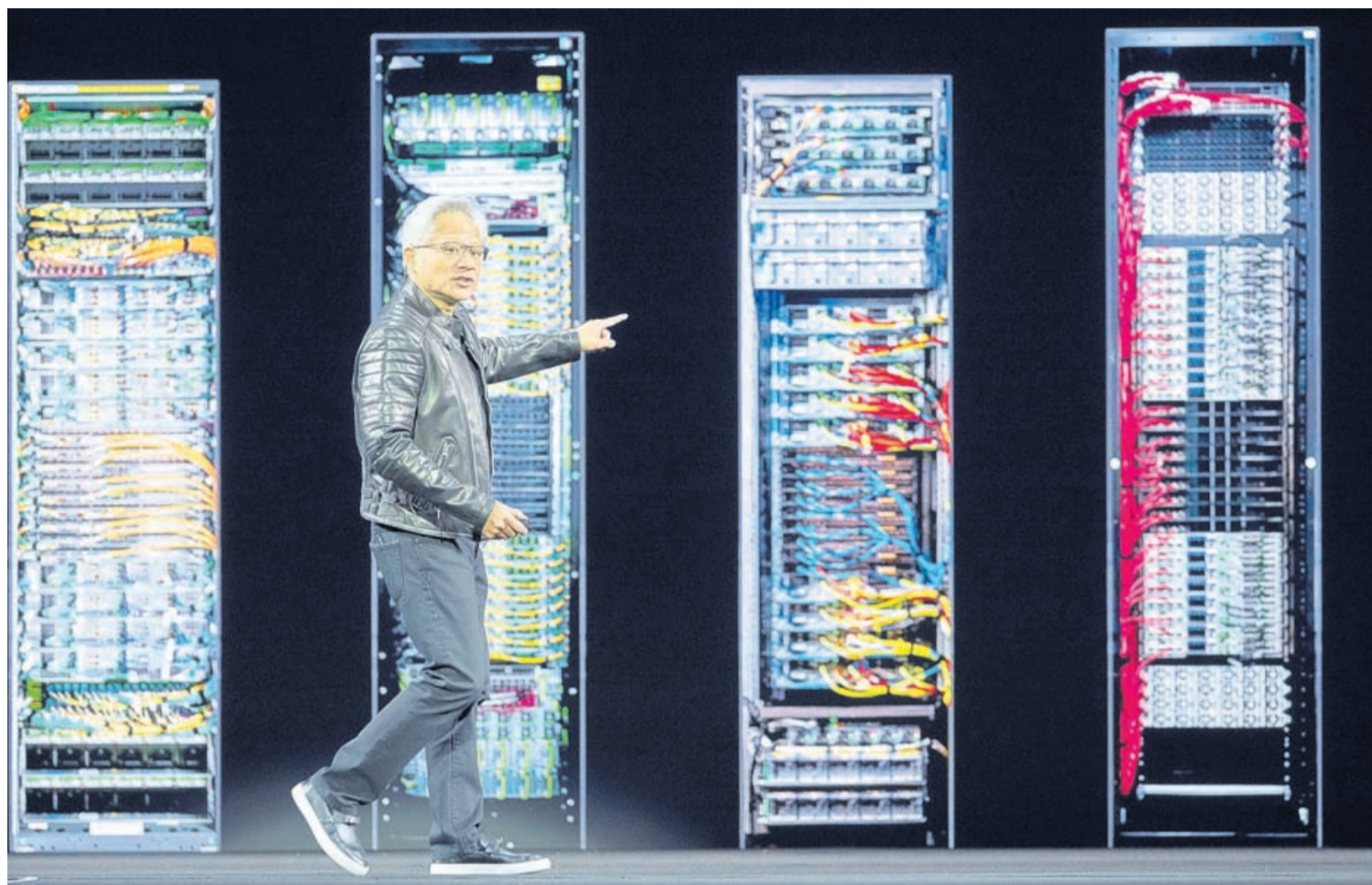


Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang unveils new Rubin AI chips at GTC 2025

By SARAH PARVINI
AP Technology Writer

Nvidia founder Jensen Huang kicked off the company's artificial intelligence developer conference on Tuesday by telling a crowd of thousands that AI is going through "an inflection point."

At GTC 2025 — dubbed the "Super Bowl of AI" — Huang focused his keynote on the company's advancements in AI and his predictions for how the industry will move over the next few years. De-



CEO Jensen Huang talks during the keynote address of Nvidia GTC Tuesday, March 18, 2025, in San Jose, Calif.

Associated Press



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2 Bed WK 7 and 14 - all views

GOLD SEASON

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2 Bed Garden view \$13,000
3 Bed Ocean view \$30,000

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1 Bed Ocean front \$23,000
1 Bed Ocean View \$17,000

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mand for GPUs from the top four cloud service providers is surging, he said, adding that he expects Nvidia's data center infrastructure revenue to hit \$1 trillion by 2028.

Huang's highly anticipated announcement revealed more details around Nvidia's next-generation graphics architectures: Blackwell Ultra and Vera Rubin -- named for the famous astronomer. Blackwell Ultra is slated for the second half of 2025, while its successor, the Rubin AI chip, is expected to launch in late 2026. Rubin Ultra will take the stage in 2027.

In a talk that lasted at over two hours, Huang outlined the "extraordinary progress" that AI has made. In 10 years, he said, AI graduated from perception and "computer vision" to generative AI, and now to agentic AI — or AI that has the ability to reason. "AI understands the context, understands what we're asking. Understands the meaning of our request," he said. "It now generates answers. Fundamentally changed how computing is done."

The next wave of AI, he said, is already happening: robotics.

Robotics fueled by so-called

"physical AI" can understand concepts like friction and inertia, cause and effect, and object permanence, he said.

"Each one of these phases, each one of these waves, opens up new market opportunities for all of us," Huang said.

The key to that physical AI, and many of Huang's other announcements, was the concept of using synthetic data generation — AI or computer-created data — for model training. AI needs digital experiences to learn from, he said, and it learns at speeds that make using humans in the training loops obsolete.

"There's only so much data and so much human demonstration we can perform," he said. "This is the big breakthrough in the last couple of years: reinforcement learning."

Nvidia's tech, he said, can help with that type of learning for AI as it attacks or tries to engage in solving a problem, step by step.

To that end, Huang announced Isaac GR00T N1, an open-source foundation model designed to assist in developing humanoid robots. Isaac GR00T N1 would be paired with an updated Cosmos AI model to help

develop simulated training data for robots.

Benjamin Lee, a professor of electrical and systems engineering at the University of Pennsylvania, said that the challenge in training robotics lies in data collection because training in the real world is time-consuming and expensive.

A simulated environment has long been a standard for reinforcement learning, Lee said, so researchers can test the effectiveness of their models.

"I think it's really exciting. Providing a platform, and an open-source one, will allow more people to learn on reinforcement learning," Lee said. "More researchers could start playing with this synthetic data — not just big players in the industry but also academic researchers." Huang introduced the Cosmos series of AI models, which can generate cost-efficient photo-realistic video that can then be used to train robots and other automated services, at CES earlier this year.

The open-source model, which works with the Nvidia's Omniverse — a physics simulation tool — to create more realistic video, promises to be much cheaper than traditional forms of gathering

training, such as having cars record road experiences or having people teach robots repetitive tasks.

U.S. car maker General Motors plans to integrate Nvidia technology in its new fleet of self-driving cars, Huang said. The two companies will work together to build custom AI systems using both Omniverse and Cosmos to train AI manufacturing models.

The Nvidia head also unveiled the company's Halos system, an AI solution built around automotive — especially autonomous driving — safety.

"We're the first company in the world, I believe, to have every line of code safety assessed," Huang said.

At the end of his talk, Huang an open-source physics engine for robotics simulation called Newton, which is being developed with Google DeepMind and Disney Research.

A small, boxy robot named Blue joined him on stage, popping up from a hatch in the floor. It beeped at Huang and followed his commands, standing beside him as he wrapped up his thoughts.

"The age of generalist robotics is here," Huang said. "If you really need."



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Rory McIlroy wins The Players Championship and Masters expectations rise

By DOUG FERGUSON

AP Golf Writer

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla.

(AP) — Rory McIlroy winning The Players Championship gave him so much of what he doesn't need.

The \$4.5 million prize is the largest for any tournament in the world. It pushed McIlroy's career earnings on the PGA Tour alone to just over \$99.7 million, second only to Tiger Woods.

The perks include a five-year exemption on the PGA Tour (his 28 wins make him a life member) and three-year exemptions to the majors (he's been eligible for all of them since 2009). It also raised expectations for McIlroy going into the Masters.

He probably doesn't need those, either.

Even at the TPC Sawgrass for the premier championship of the PGA Tour, the week for McIlroy started and ended with talk about the Masters.

It was last Tuesday when a University of Texas golfer watched McIlroy hook his tee shot into the water on the 18th during a practice round and told him it was just like the shot McIlroy hit on the 10th hole at Augusta National — the one that started his shocking collapse in the 2011 Masters. That remains as close as McIlroy has come to winning a green jacket.

McIlroy took his phone and handed it to security, the Longhorn lad was removed and McIlroy didn't want to talk about the incident a few days later.

Far more pleasant was the end of the week.

Disappointed after losing a three-shot lead with five holes to play in regulation Sunday, more nervous than he would have expected



Rory McIlroy, of Northern Ireland, reacts during a trophy ceremony after winning a playoff round of The Players Championship golf tournament Monday, March 17, 2025, in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. Associated Press

at the start of a three-hole playoff Monday, McIlroy made quick work of J.J. Spaun with three great swings. The last one was a three-quarter 9-iron in the wind that left everyone hopeful until it plopped down in the middle of an island at No. 17.

Winning The Players is a big deal, and McIlroy now has won it twice.

"I don't want to put any sort of label on it, but it is one of the biggest championships in the world," McIlroy said.

This also is the first time in his career he has two victories leading to the Masters, having won at Pebble Beach last month. Go back to last November, when McIlroy won the DP World Tour Championship in Dubai, and that makes three wins in his last six starts.

The first question from Sky Sports: "Have you ever been in a better headspace going into the majors after

those two big wins?"

The majors start with the Masters. For McIlroy, it's always the Masters. This starts the 11th year since he last won a major, his 11th time going to Augusta National knowing it's the one major keeping him from the career Grand Slam.

"I've had good starts to years before," McIlroy said, and this much is true. Go back to 2019 when he started the year with seven straight top 10s, including a victory in The Players Championship. He tied for 21st at the Masters.

"Look, I'm in good form," he said. "I'm playing well. I feel like all aspects of my game are under control. I just have to keep working hard, keep my head down. It's another opportunity to just refine little bits that need refining."

But this is setting up nicely for him.

Scottie Scheffler had to

wait a month to get going because surgery to his right palm that was punctured by a wine glass he was using to make ravioli. Scheffler still hasn't had all the pieces fall together since returning at Pebble Beach, though he does not appear to be far off.

Xander Schauffele, winner of two majors last year, just returned from two months away because of a rib injury. His only celebration has been making the cut on the number the last two weeks to extend his streak to 59 in a row.

McIlroy plans one more tournament in Texas — Houston or San Antonio — before the Masters, the ultimate measure. He feels more equipped than ever, and he certainly has been hardened by more failures than he would like to remember.

St. Andrews in 2022 and the U.S. Open the last two

years were his for the taking and someone else took home the trophy. Pinehurst No. 2 was particularly brutal last year when he missed a pair of short putts on crispy greens down the stretch.

McIlroy believes he began to turn the corner last fall in a playoff loss at Wentworth, and spending quality time on finding freedom in his swing. He also points to the second round of the Masters last year, when the wind came up and he went down with a 77 that effectively took him out of the tournament.

Now he has a shorter swing for the occasion, once for his wedge and now down to the 7-iron. He employed those beautifully in the Pacific wind when he won at Pebble Beach. His 9-iron to the par-3 17th in the playoff at Sawgrass on Monday was masterful.

"When the conditions come like that," he said, reflecting on that Friday round at Augusta last year, "I just feel like I'm a lot better prepared to handle them. It's always been OK off the tee, but it's fighting the wedges and short irons, which have been the issue, and I feel like I've been able to rectify that."

It all leads to what he believes has made him a more complete player. There is a certain calmness to him, even with the nerves he felt Monday in the playoff. The pressure will be strong as ever when he gets to Augusta National.

"Everything feels like it's in good working order at the minute," he said. "Just keep practicing and doing the right things and practicing the right habits. And day after day, week after week, they all add up to days like today." □



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Transfer portal and NIL are making it even more difficult to three-peat in college basketball

By **JOHN MARSHALL**
AP Sports Writer

Florida had a dominating team in 2005-06, winning 33 games on its way to the program's first national championship. The Gators returned nearly everyone the following season and did it again, becoming the seventh team to win consecutive national titles.

Their three-peat bid fell short the next year. The key players from the title teams were all gone and the Gators didn't even make the NCAA Tournament, proving just how difficult it is to win three straight national championships.

"It's just hard to win in general," said former Florida coach Billy Donovan, now the head coach of the NBA's Chicago Bulls. "I've always said this: If you played the NCAA Tournament over after it finished, you'd have a different national champion every year, for the most part."

Heading into this year's NCAA Tournament, one team has a chance at the first three-peat in more than 50 years: UConn.

Dan Hurley led the Huskies

to their fifth national championship in 2023, retooled the roster and added No. 6 last season, becoming the first team since Donovan's Gators to go back to back. The ride to a third straight title has been a bumpy one. The Huskies opened the season No. 3 in the pre-season AP Top 25, but went 0 for 3 at the Maui Invitational and have spent most of the season fighting injuries and inconsistencies, entering the bracket 23-10. UConn may not be as dominant now as it was when winning NCAA Tournament games by an average of 20 points per game the past two seasons, but this is March and the Huskies have shown they can tame the madness.

"Early in the year, it (three-peating) was something that was talked about around here," said Hurley, whose team opens the NCAA Tournament against Oklahoma in Raleigh, North Carolina, on Friday. "With the way that we played to this point, it is not something we are talking about (now)." Should the Huskies pull it off, they'll join rare



UConn head coach Dan Hurley calls out to his team during the second half of an NCAA college basketball game against Villanova at the Big East basketball tournament Thursday, March 13, 2025, in New York.

Associated Press

company. John Wooden's UCLA teams of the 1960s and '70s set the standard for college basketball excellence, winning at a rate not seen before or since. The Bruins won consecutive titles in 1964-65 and set a mark that may never be broken, seven straight from 1967-73. UCLA had a massive advantage with those teams, first with Lew Alcindor (now Kareem Abdul-Jabbar), then with Bill Walton, two of the greatest centers in basketball history.

"We set records that still stand to this day," Walton said in a 2024 interview with The Associated Press, a few months before he died in May. "He did not talk about winning and losing. He talked about effort and purpose, and we tried with everything we had to get to acknowledge that we were doing something right." Florida and Duke in 1991-92 were the only teams to have a chance at joining UCLA in winning at least three straight titles. Since

Florida's back to back, no reigning champion had even made it to the title game the next season until UConn.

Part of it is continuity. College players have limited eligibility, so it's rare for coaches to have the same rosters coming back. Injuries also can crush a team's chances, or a bad match-up in the lose-and-go-home NCAA Tournament can quickly halt a second deep March run.

More potholes have been added over the past two decades.

The one-and-done rule, implemented in 2005, allowed players to leave for the NBA after a single college season, often stripping teams of their best players. The transfer portal and NIL deals have made it even more difficult. The ability to transfer from a school without having to sit out a year has created a revolving door of rosters, forcing coaches to overhaul their teams nearly every year. NIL opportunities have turned into karats to lure players out of high school or from other programs. □



Los Angeles Dodgers' Shohei Ohtani follows connects for a single in the fifth inning of an MLB Japan Series baseball game against the Chicago Cubs in Tokyo, Japan, Tuesday, March 18, 2025.

Associated Press

By **DAVID BRANDT**
AP Baseball Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Yoshinobu Yamamoto threw five strong

Yamamoto, Ohtani deliver in return to Japan, Dodgers beat the Cubs 4-1 in season opener

innings, Shohei Ohtani had two hits and scored twice, and the defending World Series champion Los Angeles Dodgers beat the Chicago Cubs 4-1 on Tuesday in Major League Baseball's season opener at the Tokyo Dome. Playing in front of their home country, Yamamoto and Cubs lefty Shota Imanaga both pitched well in the first all-Japanese starting pitching matchup on opening day in MLB history. Imanaga threw four scoreless innings, allow-

ing no hits but walking four. The Dodgers jumped on Cubs reliever Ben Brown (0-1) in the fifth, scoring three runs, partly because of a throwing error by second baseman Jon Berti. Tommy Edman and Will Smith had RBI singles. Ohtani was part of the rally, delivering a hard-hit single through the right side. He finished 2 for 5 at the plate, including a double to lead off the ninth, eventually scoring another run. Yamamoto (1-0) gave up

one run on three hits and a walk, striking out four. Tanner Scott earned his first save. Chicago's Miguel Amaya drove in Dansby Swanson with a two-out double that made it 1-0 in the second. The Cubs didn't have a hit after the third. Dodgers first baseman Freddie Freeman was scratched before the game because of left rib discomfort. Shortstop Mookie Betts will miss both games in Japan because of an illness. □